

Message Text

SECRET

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SUBJECT: SECOND IMPRESSIONS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT

REF: (A) JAKARTA 4034; (B) JAKARTA 4698; (C) JAKARTA 4427;
(D) JAKARTA 1447

1. WHILE WE THUS FAR HAVE NO REASON TO CHANGE OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE THIRD SUHARTO GOVERNMENT TRANSMITTED REFTEL A, WE HAVE GAINED SOME ADDITIONAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE NEW TEAM DURING ITS FIRST MONTH OF OPERATION WHICH WE BELIEVE WORTH SHARING WITH THE DEPARTMENT ON THE EVE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT.

2. MOST STRIKING IS THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL MOOD OF CONFIDENCE. OUR INDONESIAN FRIENDS WHO HAVE RECENTLY SEEN HIM WERE IMPRESSED BY HIS SELF-ASSURANCE, WHICH WAS ALSO EVIDENT IN HIS DETERMINED AND ONLY PARTIALLY CONCILIATORY ADDRESS TO THE INDONESIAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AT THE APRIL 17 CEREMONY FOR THE TRANSFER OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMAND FROM PANGGABEAN AND SURONO TO JUSUF AND SUDOMO. THE FACT THAT SUHARTO BROUGHT LITTLE NEW MILITARY BLOOD AND NO POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATION INTO THE NEW CABINET DOES NOT THEREFORE SEEM TO INDICATE A SIEGE MENTALITY BUT RATHER A FEELING THAT HE NEED NOT PLACATE CERTAIN ELEMENTS WHO HAVE NOT EARNED HIS TRUST. HIS APRIL 17 SPEECH REFLECTS A BELIEF

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(WHICH WE FIND DIFFICULT TO SHARE) THAT HE HAS PASSED THROUGH THE MOST DANGEROUS PERIOD AND THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE MPR SESSION ARE A GOOD AUGUR FOR THE FUTURE.

3. WE HAVE HEARD FROM RELIABLE SOURCES THAT PANGGABEAN FEELS HE HAS BEEN KICKED UPSTAIRS AND THAT SUHARTO'S CLOSET AIDES ARE ATTEMPTING TO DISABUSE HIM OF THIS

NOTION. ANY EFFORTS ON HIS PART TO PLAY A ROLE IN THE POLITICAL-SECURITY SECTOR COMPARABLE TO THAT OF WIDJOJO IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR WILL THEREFORE PROBABLY GET PALACE SUPPORT. NO SUCH HELP IS FORESEEN FOR SURONO, WHO SEEMS INDEED TO HAVE BEEN KICKED UPSTAIRS. (SURONO'S INCLUSION IN THE CABINET NEVERTHELESS INDICATES SOME PRESIDENTIAL CONCERN OVER MAINTAINING ARMED FORCES SUPPORT.) MINISTER OF DEFENSE JUSUF'S INTERESTING CONCEPTION OF HIS NEW ROLE WAS REPORTED REF B.

4. SUHARTO'S MOST CONTROVERSIAL APPOINTEES HAVE APPARENTLY GOTTEN OFF TO RELATIVELY GOOD STARTS. MINISTER OF RELIGION ALAMSYAH EARNED SOME BADLY NEEDED POINTS WITH THE GENERAL MUSLIM PUBLIC WHEN HE REFUSED TO CREATE AN OFFICE IN HIS DEPARTMENT FOR MYSTICISM, BUT HE HAS ALSO PRIVATELY LET MUSLIM LEADERS KNOW THAT HE WANTS NO TROUBLE ON THIS ISSUE AND THAT HE WILL ASSUME AN ACTIVIST, COMMAND ROLE IN HIS SECTOR. MINISTER OF INFORMATION ALI MURTOPO'S INITIAL TALKS WITH THE PRESS HAVE BEEN LENGTHY, THOROUGH, REASONABLY FRANK, BUT NOT ALTOGETHER CONCILIATORY. THE PRESS IS TREATING HIM WITH OVERALL RESPECT INSPIRED APPARENTLY BY A MIXTURE OF HOPE AND APPREHENSION. MINISTER OF EDUCATION DAOED JOESOEF HAS MOVED QUICKLY AND FIRMLY TO ESTABLISH HIS AUTHORITY OVER THE UNIVERSITIES, TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE HAS MILITARY BACKING AND TO LEVY BINDING RESPONSIBILITIES ON THE RECTORS. HIS LINE WE ARE TOLD IS THAT CIVILIANS MUST KEEP ORDER ON CAMPUSES OR THE MILITARY
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WILL AND THAT THOSE UNABLE TO SHOULDER THIS RESPONSIBILITY SHOULD RESIGN. REACTION ON THE CAMPUSES IS NOT YET CLEAR. BOTH DAOED JOESOEF AND MURTOPO ARE RELYING ON THE CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES FOR MUCH OF THEIR STAFF WORK AT THIS STAGE.

5. ASIDE FROM MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE SUDARSONO'S PRESS INTERVIEW REPORTED REF C, LITTLE HAS YET BEEN HEARD FROM THE NEW TECHNOCRATS, WHO COULD BE EXPECTED TO BEGIN AT A MORE CAUTIOUS PACE. WE HAVE HEARD THAT MINISTER OF MINES SOEBROTO IS SPENDING MANY LATE HOURS IN THE OFFICE EDUCATING HIMSELF ON ENERGY MATTERS. MINISTER OF STATE FOR RESEARCH HABIBIE HAS BROUGHT WITH HIM A HOST OF TECHNICIANS FROM THE PERTAMINA RESEARCH DEPARTMENT AND APPEARS TO BE TRANSFORMING WHAT WAS A SMALL OFFICE UNDER SUMITRO INTO A VERITABLE MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENT WITH A HEAVY ACCENT ON TECHNOLOGY.

6. AS STATED IN REF A, PERSONNEL CHANGES AT THE OPERATIONAL, DIRECTOR GENERAL LEVEL WILL BE A KEY INDICATOR OF WHAT NEW IMPETUS IF ANY THE NEW CABINET WILL BRING TO THE SUHARTO REGIME. THERE HAVE AS YET BEEN NO ANNOUNCEMENTS

OR EVEN NEW RUMORS OF POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AT THIS
LEVEL NOR OF APPOINTMENTS TO THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED JUNIOR
MINISTER SLOTS.

7. THE CALM FOLLOWING THE MPR STORM HAS GIVEN THE SUHARTO
GOVERNMENT TIME TO REGROUP, WHICH SOME IN THE NEW
CABINET SEEM ALREADY TO BE PUTTING TO GOOD USE. AT THIS POINT,
HOWEVER, WE SEE NO REAL REASON TO ALTER OUR ASSESSMENT (REFS D & A)
THAT THE EXCESSIVE MEASURES EMPLOYED TO ENSURE ANOTHER
SUHARTO GOVERNMENT COST IT MONTHS OFF ITS
LIFE AND THAT THE NEW CABINET DOES NOT PROMISE THE DYNAMISM
AND DIRECTION TO RECOUP THIS LOSS.
MASTERS

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